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GATEWAY TO IMPERIAL COUNTY

TOWN HALL MEETING

Congressman urges Valley groups to pull together for funds

BY ELIZABETH VARIN

Staff Writer

Cities and legislators have to look at new ways to get funding locally, said Imperial County's congressman to local leaders and residents Monday.

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, held a town hall meeting in El Centro, and called for people to look at funding globally instead of just through their groups.

"It's a whole new ball game to get road improvements and help for non-profits," he said.

School districts, local governments and nonprofits can't look for federal funding alone now, he said. Everything is being cut, so people need to group together to fight.

"Imperial County's a small county population-wise, but we have to align with everybody else and say 'if we're going to keep education ... if we're going to put people to work, if we're going to have alternative energy,' I would be part of a national movement to change the whole direction we're going.



About 30 local officials and residents listen to a federal budget update from Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, on Monday. ELIZABETH VARIN PHOTO

"We're fighting for the soul of America here."

Filner updated those in attendance about where the federal budget is now, and news wasn't good from the Washington, D.C., front.

"In the short run I think we're in for some very tough times," he said. "The budget will continue to be cut in the people programs."

Some in the Congress won't cut defense spending or raise taxes, Filner said. But you can't fix the deficit if you take both off the table.

"So the situation when it comes down to (the city of El Centro) budget, to

(Imperial County Board of Supervisors Chairman) Jack (Terrazas) and his budget, and your small businesses for example, we're in a terrible fix if we continue to go in the same direction because they're going to continue to cut those things we need the most and they're not cutting the things we need the least," he said.

The key, Filner added, will be working together to make sure those things that shouldn't be cut are saved.